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**REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY
TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING THE SUNDARBANS
RESERVE FOREST DIALOG IN KHULNA
APRIL 18, 2009**

KHULNA, APRIL 18 -- Following is the text of remarks by Ambassador James F. Moriarty to the press following the Sundarbans Reserve Forest dialog in Khulna on April 18.

(begin text)

Assalamu alaykum and good evening. I am delighted to be here today. We just completed a very important discussion on management options for the Sundarbans. The first of many, I hope. The Sundarbans region is unique. It is a World Heritage Site. The Sundarbans region is not just the pride of Bangladesh but also an internationally-acclaimed natural forest ecosystem. As many of you know, the Sundarbans region currently stands third in the voting for the “New Seven Wonders of Nature.”

Managing such an important ecosystem is complicated. I am pleased to report that the United States and other development partners are committed to helping Bangladesh protect this key ecosystem. We will help Bangladesh manage the Sundarbans’ resources in a sustainable fashion. We are also committed to helping improve the lives of the people who live in and around the mangrove forest.

Let me give you an example of our commitment. The U.S. has funded the Integrated Protected Area Co-management project – known as IPAC. The Ministries of Environment and Forest as well as Fisheries and Livestock are implementing this project. The Bangladeshi ministries responsible for managing the Sundarbans and other protected areas understand that to protect these resources needs the direct involvement of the people who depend on them. The U.S.-funded IPAC project and the Government of Bangladesh have developed a model to bring these people together to jointly manage this

key resource. This co-management approach yielded encouraging results in several pilot projects across Bangladesh. We look forward to monitoring its success in the Sundarbans.

Protecting the Sundarbans region benefits those who live in and around it. I am sure you all know that Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The United States Government is committed to addressing global climate change threats. The Sundarbans region plays a unique role when it comes to climate change. The area acts as a natural buffer against disasters. Countless lives were saved during Cyclone Sidr because the storm came ashore in the Sundarbans, which bore the brunt of the storm. Protecting this natural cyclone shelter is critical to saving lives and protecting livelihoods.

Protecting the Sundarbans region also benefits the rest of Bangladesh. Ecotourism in this beautiful area already generates millions of dollars in revenue each year. Through effective management and ecologically-responsible tourism development, the Sundarbans has unlimited potential. All Bangladeshis have a financial stake in protecting the Sundarbans.

Bangladesh is an important friend and ally to the United States. We have a longstanding relationship with this country and have provided more than 5 billion U.S. dollars in aid since Bangladesh's independence. Our annual development assistance programs average over \$100 million. We will continue this strong support and look forward to working with Bangladesh to achieve its goal of a better and more prosperous future for all of its citizens.

I look forward to taking your questions. Thank you.

(End text)

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**As prepared for delivery*

GR / 2009